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LETTER DATED 20 AUGUST 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF YEMEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter from Mr. Abdulkarim Al-Eryani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen, concerning the latest developments in connection with Eritrea's actions on Yemen's Lesser Hanish Island.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abdalla Saleh AL-ASHTAL
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 19 August 1996 from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my letter of 17 August 1996 addressed to you concerning my country's compliance with the Security Council's appeal for the exercise of the utmost self-restraint with regard to the fresh Eritrean act of aggression against Yemen's Lesser Hanish Island and for the diplomatic efforts being made by the United Nations and France to be given a chance to succeed in solving this new and dangerous complication contrived by Etitrea, I should like to inform the Council that yesterday, 18 August 1996, in a meeting with His Excellency the President of the Republic, Lieutenant-General Ali Abdullah Saleh, the French envoy, Ambassador Francis Gutmann, informed us that the Eritrean Government had officially notified him on the same day that it would withdraw its forces from Yemen's Lesser Hanish Island within the next few days and would restore the situation that had prevailed prior to 10 August last. He further informed us that Eritrea's undertaking to this effect had been embodied in an official letter signed by the Eritrean Minister for Foreign Affairs and handed over to the French envoy.

The Government of my country conveys to the Council its great appreciation and gratitude for the position it has adopted with respect to these grave developments. At the same time, it wishes to place on record its great appreciation and gratitude to the French Government and its envoy, Ambassador Francis Gutmann, for their active role in defusing the dangerous situation that resulted from Eritrea's irresponsible action. It further expresses its highest appreciation and gratitude to all the States members of the Council for the great interest they have shown in the matter. The Government of my country again assures the Council that it is anxious for a peaceful solution to the ongoing dispute between it and Eritrea and that it is fully committed to the Agreement on Principles concluded by the two parties in Paris on 21 May 1996 and to the negotiations being held under the auspices of France with a view to reaching agreement on arbitration, in accordance with article 2 of the Agreement on Principles, which must be concluded by 15 October 1996.

Although it gives the foregoing assurances and although it has given the diplomatic efforts of the United Nations and France a chance to take their course and to defuse this grave situation and to bear fruit in Eritrea's undertaking, as secured by the French envoy, to withdraw its forces from Yemen's Lesser Hanish Island, the Government of my country is nevertheless beset with concern and doubts as to the possibility of deception on the part of Eritrea with respect to fulfilling the undertaking given to the French Government and, through it, to the international community as represented by the Security Council. This is particularly so since that undertaking was not linked with any deadline for the removal of the military presence from the Yemeni island. This is a matter that will doubtless be of the greatest importance for security and peace in the region and for the safety of international navigation there.

Accordingly, the Government of my country requests the Council to continue its efforts and the exercise of its good offices in order to compel the Eritrean Government to evacuate the Yemeni island within the next few days in fulfilment of the undertaking it has given to the French Government. It further requests that the matter should continue to receive the Council's consideration until such time as the Yemeni island has been cleared of the Eritrean military presence.

(Signed) Abdulkarim AL-ERYANI
Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister for Foreign Affairs